both sides agreed that specific information would be exchanged through the mechanism for helping investigations on either side related to terrorist acts and prevention of violence and terrorist acts in the two countries. It was also agreed that while the Anti-terrorism Mechanism would meet on a quarterly basis, any information which is required to be conveyed on priority basis would be immediately conveyed through the respective heads of the mechanism.

(b) Statements by some Pak leaders that issues related to Jammu and Kashmir would be outside the purview of the mechanism have come to the notice of Government.

(c) and (d) During the Prime Minister's meeting with President Musharraf of Pakistan in Havana in September 2006, it was decided to put in place an India-Pakistan anti-terrorism institutional mechanism to identify and implement counter-terrorism initiatives and investigations. In line with the Havana agreement between the two leaders, the mandate of the mechanism agreed in the March 6, 2007 meeting does not envisage any exception.

Peace process in Sri Lanka

2615. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether External Affairs Minister visited Sri Lanka during January 2007 to hold top-level talks on the progress of the peace process in Sri Lanka and also conveyed India's concern about the Tamils living in Sri Lanka;

(b) whether Lankan Foreign Minister visited India in March 2007 and discussed on regional cooperation, security issue, bilateral affairs;

(c) whether Sri Lanka and India agreed for joint Indian naval patrolling in the Palk Strait to prevent possible recurrence of attacks on Indian fishermen; and

(d) whether India is enhancing security measures at major ports in the wake of possible terrorist attacks on vital installations?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes. Minister of External Affairs visited Sri Lanka on

January 9-10, 2007 to extend an invitation from our Prime Minister to Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse for the 14th SAARC Summit to be held in New Delhi in April, 2007. During meetings with the Sri Lankan leadership, we conveyed to the Government of Sri Lanka that the only solution to the ethnic problem is a negotiated, political settlement within the framework of a united Sri Lanka that is acceptable to all sections of the Sri Lankan society. We also expressed concern about any escalation of violence resulting in civilian casualities.

(b) Yes. The Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka visited India on March 19-21, 2007. During the visit, bilateral relations, the peace process in Sri Lanka and SAARC issues were discussed.

(c) No.

(d) All the major ports of the country are already ISPS (International Shipping and Port Facility Security) Code-compliant. The security level as per this code is raised according to the perceived threat.

Directions on subsidies to Haj pilgrims

2616. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of recent directions of Supreme Court on subsidies given to Haj pilgrims by Government;

(b) whether Saudi Arabia and Pakistan told Government in past that the State subsidy for Haj pilgrims is un-Islamic;

(c) the amount of quota of pilgrims, State-wise, and the amount of subsidy that was given to Haj pilgrims during the last five years from 2001-02 to 2005-06, State wise;

(d) whether the subsidy is given to any other religion/or faiths in the country except Islam, and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) The Hon'ble Supreme Court, in its judgement of 18/09/2006, stayed for 2006 the orders of the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court to the extent they restrained Government of India from providing funds or giving financial subsidies for Haj. Insofar as validity and legality of such financial grant is concerned, the Hon'ble Supreme